

WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

BRIEFING PAPER

Prepared for the

February 2005 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this discussion will be to resume workshop discussions with the Commission on the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) update now in its second phase. This is the first workshop out of three in Phase 2 that will be devoted to summarizing statutory and Commission policy for the statewide plan and that provide direction in how transportation investments are to be made. This month the three themes are Preservation, Safety, and Transportation Access. The workshops will establish a connection between these guiding principles, the Phase 1 data analysis, and emerging directions for the future of the state's transportation system.

In Phase 2 the Commission will consider both base or existing investments and proposed areas of targeted investment. The Commission may also consider possible policies and strategies to develop.

The presentation will describe the milestones to complete the WTP: the Commission's role, a timeline, and a general workplan (see attachment A). Staff will also describe the existing federal and state statutes and Commission policy that guide planning and prioritizing transportation investments (see attachment B). Attachment B depicts federal and state law and Commission policy that has been in place since the late 1980s and 1990s. These guiding principles set the stage for the rest of the discussions.

After this background discussion, the February workshop will focus on proposals for three of the WTP issues—Preservation, Safety, and Transportation Access—in context of existing programs of investment. (Later workshops will describe proposals for the remaining WTP issues.)

ACTION/OUTCOME:

Staff will seek Commission concurrence on the existing set of guiding principles and those areas where we have identified a gap in Commission policy.

WTP information has been used in an early action revenue recommendation to the Legislature in 2005. Some of today's discussion will be familiar to Commissioners from those discussions. These topics remain part of the WTP update in the event that the 2005 Legislature does not act on the Commission's 2005 recommendation.

The Commission will review a preliminary list of areas to target for investment and staff will seek feedback on these.

The proposed areas of targeted investment will be further developed in Phase 2 and become part of the Commission's prioritized investment proposal to the Legislature in 2007.

BACKGROUND:

The WTP is a blueprint for transportation programs and investment, adopted by the Transportation Commission and forming the policy and long-range plan for the state's transportation system. The WTP is required by state and federal law to be regularly updated. The Commission is scheduled to adopt the update currently underway later in 2005. It will cover the period 2007-2026 and will be the basis for a 10-year investment proposal (2007-2016) to the Legislature for 2007.

The WTP update has been framed along 9 strategic issues:

- System Preservation
- Safety
- Transportation Access
- Bottlenecks and Chokepoints
- System Efficiencies
- Building Future Visions
- Moving Freight
- Strong Economy and Jobs
- Health and the Environment

Phase 1 of the update has developed and analyzed data about the transportation system and its use, including current and expected future conditions, demand for the movement of people and goods, and the effects of the system on the economy and the environment. (See issue folios for summaries of Phase 1 analysis and investigation.)

DISCUSSION:

Directions for possible statewide policies, strategies and investment programs that have emerged from Phase 1. There are four distinct decision points for the Commission in Phase 2:

- **Policy statements:** Either existing or proposed new or changed Commission policy or a recommendation to change state or federal law.
- **Strategies:** How to implement Commission policy which will lead to investments.
- **Investments:** Either operating or capital programs, by category, that lead to projects.
- **Assumed financial capacity** for the 20-year period covered by the plan.

Staff have encapsulated these proposed policies, strategies, and investments as shown in Attachment C for the first three WTP issues.

Today we will discuss Commission direction for the WTP's policy and strategy proposals that have emerged, and we will discuss investment proposals for three WTP issues—Preservation, Safety, and Transportation Access. Subsequent workshops will delve into the policy, strategy, and investment proposals for the remaining six WTP issues (March and April 2005). Shortly after, the Commission will prioritize proposals that would become a 10-year investment proposal to the Legislature in 2007.

A 10-year investment proposal would be part of the 20-year WTP update. A draft WTP would be presented to the Commission in Fall 2005, then the draft WTP would be available for public comment period (roughly September-October 2005), and the Commission would adopt a final plan in December 2005.

RECOMMENDATION:

Concur on the statutory and policy guidance.

Concur on the “To Do” policy and strategy proposals—some are presently underway now and some are longer term efforts.

Concur on investment proposals to continue into later prioritization stages.

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